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The effects of an Even Start Family Literacy Program on selected parent participants

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**The Effects of an Even Start Family Literacy Program
on Selected Parent Participants**

A Thesis

Presented to

**The Faculty of the Department of Teacher Education
San Jose State University**

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Nancy E. Becker

December 1996

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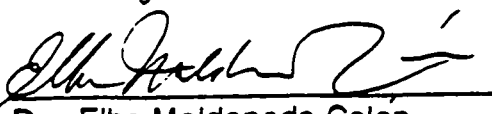
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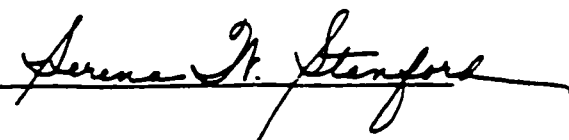
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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF AN EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM ON SELECTED PARENT PARTICIPANTS

by Nancy E. Becker

This project examines the effects of an Even Start Family Literacy Program on selected parent participants in the program. The participants were selected for their understanding of and emerging ability to speak English.

The purpose of this study was to learn from three selected parent participants how they were affected by their participation in the Even Start Family Literacy Program.

Case studies were developed of three parent participants who were learning to speak English. Data were collected through classroom observation, and audio-taped interviews with the participants.

Analysis of the data included compiling observation and field notes. Interviews with parent participants were transcribed and coded. All data were examined for meaningful patterns.

Findings indicated that the Even Start Family Literacy Program had positive influences on the selected parent participants. Parents felt successful about acquiring English and fulfilling their role as their children's first teacher.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction to the Research Project.....	1
The Even Start Family Literacy Program.....	2
Description of an Even Start Family Literacy Program.....	3
Program Features.....	4
Parent and Child Together (PACT).....	6
Question for Consideration.....	7
Research Constraints.....	8
Relevance of the Study.....	8
Summary.....	9
Chapter Two: A Review of the Current Literature.....	10
Family Literacy: An Overview.....	10
A Deficit View.....	11
A Wealth Model View.....	13
Three Distinctions Within Family Literacy.....	16
Research Exploring Naturally-Occurring Literacy in Families.....	16
Home/School Partnerships.....	19
Intergenerational Literacy Programs.....	21
Examples of Intergenerational Literacy Programs.....	23
Effects of the Even Start Family Literacy Program.....	28
Summary.....	34
Chapter Three: The Research Methodology.....	36
Case Study Rationale.....	36
Research Sites and Settings.....	37
The Participants.....	38
Data Collection.....	41
Data Analysis.....	45
Summary.....	47
Chapter Four: A Description of an Even Start Family Literacy Class	
The Even Start Family Literacy Program Setting.....	49
Chapter Five: Delia, Juanita, and Berta: Three Case Studies.....	56
Delia.....	56
Juanita.....	65
Berta.....	74

Chapter Six: A Discussion of the Data.....	83
Findings.....	83
Effects of an Even Start Family Literacy Program.....	87
Understandings Gained.....	89
Implications for Further Study.....	91
Conclusion.....	91
Appendix I.....	93
Appendix II.....	95
References.....	97

Chapter One

Introduction

California classrooms are increasingly populated with children for whom English is a second language. By the year 2000, California will become the first state in the Union where racial and language minorities form a majority of the population, with approximately 56 per cent of the student pool reflecting this new reality (U.S. Department of Education, 1991). As a result of this societal shift, we are challenged to use this cultural diversity to the best advantage in shaping a vital, cooperative populace. Since all children are an important part of the future of our state, the well being of our society is connected to how well parents and teachers prepare and educate today's children for tomorrow's landscape.

Parental involvement in the education of their children has always been encouraged, but can present particular difficulties when the language of the home differs from the language of the school. Parents may think if they don't speak English well they can't help their children succeed in school, or that the school environment provides all the learning situations necessary (Auerbach, 1989, 1995; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). Educators have the opportunity to dispel these erroneous beliefs by finding ways to encourage and invite parental participation in the education of their children. Family literacy programs are one way to assist in aiding parents to support their children's education. This study focuses on one such program, the Even Start Family Literacy Program.

Even Start Family Literacy Program

The national Even Start Family Literacy Program was initiated as a means of combining early childhood education and adult education into unified programs which use community resources. It's three major goals are (1) to help parents become full partners in the education of their children, (2) to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners, (3) and to provide literacy instruction for parents. The programs have no specific curriculum and are created individually to meet the needs of the community in which they are located (Goodling, 1994; Irwin, 1991; McKee & Rhett, 1995; St. Pierre, Swartz, Gamse, Murray, Deck, & Nickel 1995). The Even Start Family Literacy Program was authorized by Public Law 100-297 of 1988 and was instituted in 1989. It was revised by Public Law 102-73 in 1991 (Irwin, 1991). In a national evaluation of the program carried out in 1995 (St. Pierre et al., 1995), effects noted were improvements in parent literacy skills along with improvement in children's school readiness and vocabulary.

To be eligible, a family must live in the attendance area of schools with active Title One programs. These schools are the recipients of federal funds designated to support the learning of children who have been identified as having an educational disadvantage due to low income circumstances. Children must be under 8 years of age and parents must meet the eligibility requirements of the Adult Education Act to qualify for the program. These requirements state parents must not be

currently enrolled in secondary school, must not be required to be enrolled in secondary school, and lack mastery of basic skills in English which would put them at a disadvantage for employment (U.S. Congressional Code, 1988). At least one parent and one child from each family must participate together in an Even Start program (Goodling, 1994; McKee & Rhett, 1995).

Because there is no one model for Even Start programs, there is extensive flexibility offered for locally developed programs to meet the needs of varying communities. The three components Even Start Programs include are: (1) parenting education, (2) adult education, and (3) early childhood education. Parents are given training on ways in which they can carry out the task of being their child's first teacher. They are also instructed in literacy tasks which help them improve their own education. Children are provided with appropriate early childhood experiences to help build a literacy base (Goodling, 1994; McKee & Rhett, 1995). The Even Start family literacy program that I am acquainted with is located in the south San Francisco Bay Area.

Description of an Even Start Family Literacy Program

The Even Start Family Literacy Program in the south San Francisco Bay Area school district I observed was instituted in January 1993 by Educational Partners. This community-based organization collaborated with a school district to create the program. The four-year federal grant was written specifically to serve the literacy needs of

families with children from 0-8 years of age. Approximately 50% of the district's students are Hispanic; 36% of these students are Limited English Proficient (LEP). Mindful of the concentration of Spanish language speakers, the Educational Partners Even Start Family Literacy Program was created to serve the needs of Spanish-speaking LEP families (Cassin, 1995).

Family literacy programs typically focus on ways in which parents and children can engage each other in the learning process. Additionally, those programs which are created with second language acquisition as a focus include an ESL component along with the typical parenting and early childhood education information. The Even Start Family Literacy Program in the south San Francisco Bay Area school district I observed includes the following components:

- adult literacy instruction

- English as a Second Language (ESL) for adults/children

- parenting education

- early childhood education classes for children

- Parent and Child Together (PACT) activities

(Cassin, 1995)

Program Features

Early evening classes for both parents and children are held twice weekly in separate classrooms at neighborhood schools. During these classes, children's literature is used for both the children and adults as a

means of increasing literacy, as well as a vehicle for learning English. The books are carefully selected examples of good children's literature. Related activities are developed to correspond to the stories. Projects which involve parent/child cooperation, such as creating pages for family books, making costumes for character role plays, and reproducing props for story retelling, are a few activities which may be used during a class session. The activities provide opportunities for parent/child shared involvement. They build skills in manual dexterity, reading, writing, planning, and vocabulary extension. The predictable patterns in the stories enhance language acquisition through the repetitive, rhythmic structure they employ. The engaging stories serve as a foundation for discussions that relate to the lives of the program participants as well as providing activity extensions.

Books are checked out each week so that they may be enjoyed at home and also used in class for the parental ESL lesson. The vocabulary is translated and written on the chalkboard so that parents can copy the English word along with its Spanish translation. A discussion of the vocabulary precedes the introduction of each new book. The parent advocate, who leads and teaches the class, reads the story commenting and making explanation as she reads. The parents then read the story in unison with the advocate. They ask questions, make comments, and draw comparisons. The group works through pronunciation and meaning nuances so they will be prepared to read the

story to their children, both at home and during the evening programs. One class session I observed was the initial reading of *The Rebus Bears*. After copying and discussing the vocabulary, the parent advocate read through the book inviting discussion about the pictures used in place of words. After the group had read along in unison, an informal chat about customary places at the dinner table and general housekeeping ensued. There was considerable laughter and conversational engagement about what Goldilocks would find if she were to walk in unannounced at the parent participants' homes.

Parent and Child Together (PACT)

Interaction between the parents and children using the selected predictable books is central to the program and is designated as parent and child together activity or PACT. It is during this structured intergenerational exchange period that parent and child co-learners have the opportunity to act as teachers and helpers to each other. The program I observed has experimented with alternating the PACT activities between the adult and childrens' classrooms. The purpose of this recurring rotation is to provide an opportunity for the children to select and direct activities of their own choosing when PACT is held in their classroom. This provides an unstructured occasion for the children to introduce activities and act as instructors to their parents. The children are free to choose as many or as few activities as they please. Common choices are puzzles, selecting a book to share, creating a project with

paper, crayons, scissors, and paste or role playing in the play house. By placing them in the role of teacher in their own environment, the value of their choice is validated. When PACT activities are held in the adult classroom, structured activities relating to the current lesson, such as creating pages for a family book, or color, cut, and paste projects, are presented to the parent and child to work on together. Having an opportunity to observe these intergenerational classes and embracing a newly-acquired interest in family literacy, led to my curiosity regarding the effects of the Even Start Family Literacy Program on the parent participants.

Question for Consideration

The purpose of this study is to learn from selected parents how they have been influenced by their participation in the Even Start Family Literacy Program. I am interested to learn how they view the program with regard to themselves and their children.

Areas of Interest

Through classroom observation and the interview process, I was interested to learn what impact the Even Start Family Literacy Program had on the participating parents. I wanted to find out in what ways they felt the program benefited them and their children, and the ways they felt it could better meet their needs. I was interested to know if the participating parents felt their participation in the program made a difference for them. I wanted to learn about hopes for the future from

having participated in the Even Start Family Literacy Program, hopes both for the parents and their children. As a result of my inquiry, I wanted to find out if the participants themselves felt they had changed or had made changes in their lives from having been involved in the Even Start Family Literacy Program.

Research Constraints

This study is necessarily limited by the need to select parent participants for their emerging fluency in and understanding of English, my only language. Since Even Start Family Literacy Programs are developed to meet the needs of the communities in which they are located, the results of this study may not apply to other Even Start Family Literacy Programs. The research is further constrained by having only three participants.

Relevance of the Study

My growing interest in family literacy has prompted me to explore parent participant interests and attitudes concerning the effect of the Even Start Family Literacy Program on their lives. I am interested to learn from individual parents, in their own words, about the program and in what ways, if any, it has impacted their lives. As families are considered a cornerstone of society, it is relevant to study ways in which parents may be assisted to fulfill their important sociological role.

The Even Start Family Literacy Program in the south San Francisco Bay Area I observed was specifically designed to meet the

needs of English acquisition and involvement in literacy activities for Spanish-speaking family participants in this school community.

Participation in a family literacy environment acknowledges the importance of the family unit in supporting the educational success of its children and provides opportunity to practice skills in adult literacy, English as a Second Language (ESL), early childhood education, and parenting education. Parental interests, attitudes, preferences, and involvement are all valuable pieces of information to collect to ensure that the program components are benefiting the participants in meaningful ways.

Summary

The effects of an Even Start Family Literacy Program on selected parent participants are addressed in the following chapters. Chapter Two presents a review of the current literature on the topic of family literacy in general, and effects of the Even Start Family Literacy Program specifically. The focus of Chapter Three is a discussion of the methodology used in compiling the case studies, which are the center of this research. Chapter Four gives a description of a typical Even Start Family Literacy Program class providing a background for the three case studies which are presented in Chapter Five. A discussion of the findings and conclusions of the study are detailed in Chapter Six.

Chapter Two

Review of Current Literature

The following review begins with an overview of family literacy. A look at how the concept of family literacy has expanded from its beginnings as a transmission of school practices system to a broader foundation which includes and values the experiences of multicultural homes is next. A discussion of research highlighting differences in deficit views versus wealth views of literacy in families follows. Research exploring naturally-occurring literacy in families, home/school partnerships, and intergenerational programs are discussed as three categories under the family literacy umbrella. The chapter closes with a discussion of the effects of the intergenerational Even Start Family Literacy program in its brief history.

Family Literacy: An Overview

Family literacy is a concept of intergenerational involvement in education which focuses on parents as the first teachers of their child, as well as the family as a learning unit (Morrow, 1995; Morrow, Tracey & Maxwell, 1995). The term was coined by Denny Taylor (1981, 1993) in her doctoral dissertation dealing with the uses of reading and writing within families (Taylor, 1981). In the broadest interpretation, it consists of "environments which enable adult learners to enhance their own literacies, and at the same time provide environments which promote the literacies of their children" (Braun, 1991: 1). Two distinct opposing

perspectives have developed under the broad family literacy umbrella. They are referred to as deficit views and wealth views.

A Deficit View

Within the past several years, family literacy has been embraced as a sort of panacea for national educational perplexities. Elsa Auerbach (1989,1995) points to rhetoric that refers to the “problem of illiteracy being contagious” and the “plague of illiteracy.” Such illness-related references serve to create misconceptions that non-mainstream families are somehow prone to disease-described literacy failings because they are judged by the following assumptions:

1. Language-minority students come from literacy impoverished homes where education is not valued or supported.
2. Family literacy involves a one-way transfer of skills from parents to children.
3. Children become literate to the extent that their parents extend school-like activities in the home.
4. Existing school practices are adequate, and it is home factors that will determine who succeeds.
5. Parents’ own problems get in the way of creating positive family literacy contexts.

(Auerbach, 1995:15)

These assumptions constitute a narrow perspective that is based on a belief that the types of practices carried out in the schools are effective when transferred to the home. This has been referred to as a deficit view.

Because definitions of what constitutes family literacy differ widely, Morrow, Tracey & Maxwell (1995) refer to it as a debatable construct and recognize that professionals in the field hold differing perspectives. For instance, what is referred to as a deficit perspective approaches family literacy as a means to transmit school practices. This perspective does not take into consideration literary practices inherent in families or the social context in which families live (Auerbach, 1989, 1995; Flores, Cousin & Diaz, 1991; Morrow, Paratore, Gaber, Harrison & Tracey 1993; Morrow, Tracey & Maxwell, 1995; Taylor, 1993). Indeed, this perspective is often driven by concerns which primarily link illiteracy and unemployment (Morrow, Paratore, Gaber, Harrison & Tracey, 1993; Auerbach, 1989, 1995). This perspective is reflected in what Elsa Auerbach (1995) refers to as an overall alarmist concern with a crisis in American education. She contends that the shifting of blame for declining skills down through the educational system results in the buck stopping at the door of the family (Auerbach, 1995). When the transmission of school practices model does not succeed, problems of schooling are seen as originating from the family. The notion, then, is the educational problems should be fixed within families. Auerbach states:

In the meantime, public education continues to suffer cutbacks, and the social conditions in which families must live continue to deteriorate. Thus, 'the blame the families' hypothesis may serve an important ideological function of deflecting attention away from the very conditions that give rise to literacy problems--poverty, unemployment, and inadequate health care and housing.

(Auerbach, 1995:23)

Auerbach's seminal research with ESL parents at the University of Massachusetts/Boston English Family Literacy Program indicated traditional forms of parent involvement¹ are not necessarily transferable to immigrant and refugee families, who must be recognized for the different circumstances of language, culture and socioeconomic realities which influence their lives (Auerbach, 1989, 1995).

Research in the field of family literacy is challenging the deficit view by suggesting schools should be informed by what is happening in the families and communities they serve. This inverse of the transmission of school practice view is referred to as the wealth model.

A Wealth Model View

The perspective conflicting with the deficit model has been termed the wealth model (Morrow, Tracey & Maxwell, 1995). It is concerned with

¹ traditional forms of parental involvement include performing academic tasks with children, helping at school, creating an atmosphere at home that is conducive to learning and responding to school communications

the strengths of literacy patterns which exist in the home (Auerbach 1989, 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzales, 1992; Taylor, 1993; Unwin 1995).

Morrow, Tracey & Maxwell (1995) describe the wealth model in this way:

In contrast to being based on the transmission model, which is a school driven curriculum, the wealth model suggests that the family literacy curriculum be based on the needs voiced by the family literacy clients.

(Morrow, Tracey & Maxwell, 1995:11)

Non-mainstream populations, which include ESL families as well as those considered culturally and economically disadvantaged, have an increased opportunity for successful literacy outcomes when involved with programs based on their participatory collaboration (Auerbach 1989, 1995; Flores, Cousin & Diaz, 1991; Gadsen, 1995).

This participatory approach, inspired by the work of Freire (1970), broadens family literacy to encompass a variety of parent/child interactions which may also include school-based activities.² Family literacy programs based on a wealth model perspective include the following aspects:

1. Parents or other care givers work independently on reading and writing to develop their own literacy.
2. Parents use literacy to address family and community problems, for example, immigration, employment and

² Parent/child interactions may include cooking, going on outings, engaging in teaching a child a family skill such as carpentry or sewing, and so on.

housing issues.

3. Parents address child-rearing concerns through family literacy class (e.g., safety, discipline and intergenerational cultural conflicts).
4. Parents support the development of their home language and culture.
5. Parents interact with the school system and learn to understand and respond to school issues.

(Auerbach, 1995:25)

Partnering with families for literacy growth regards parents as a resource rather than an impediment to learning. The role of the school, then, becomes one of facilitating the connections between the classroom and the home to make learning relevant and meaningful to the lives of the participants in family literacy programs.

The conflicting perspectives of deficit and wealth views are the topic of considerable debate in the literature and must be carefully considered. Of course, there are many shades of gray between the extremes of black and white. Most family literacy programs fall somewhere in between, along the continuum from deficit to wealth models (Auerbach, 1995). Philosophical differences aside, for families in which English is a second language, the recognition of the significance of the family's central role in the development of literacy provides positive reinforcement of their valuable contribution. Our schools are challenged

to consider family literacy as a component of the curriculum which enables generations to learn together, building communities of learners (McCaleb, 1994; Morrow, Paratore, Gaber, Harrison & Tracey, 1993).

Three Distinctions within Family Literacy

The topic of family literacy can be unwieldy due to its wide interpretation. In order to better understand its differing aspects, it is useful to separate family literacy into three areas for purposes of clarity and understanding. The categories which follow are: (1) research exploring naturally-occurring literacy in families; (2) home/school partnership, also referred to as parent involvement programs (Morrow, Tracey & Maxwell 1995); and (3) intergenerational programs (Morrow, Paratore, Gaber, Harrison & Tracey, 1993). Together, these domains make up the dynamic, evolving entity known as family literacy.

Research Exploring Naturally-Occurring Literacy in Families

Research exploring naturally-occurring literacy in families focuses on observing and recording experiences that are natural outgrowths of daily life (Morrow, Paratore, Gaber, Harrison & Tracey, 1993; Morrow, Tracey & Maxwell, 1995). It involves the observation and description of literacy experiences that are by-products of daily living and, depending on the purposes of the study, may determine ways to implement findings in school settings. Research of this kind is not always connected to school curriculum or goals, but can lead to classroom implementation of research findings. It concentrates on how families use literacy to

navigate the real worlds which they inhabit. Educators interested in understanding communities and cultures find this type of research useful in enhancing their classroom work (Gonzalez, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzales & Amanti, 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992). Three examples of research which explore naturally occurring literacy in families follow.

Elsa Auerbach's (1989) research with immigrant and refugee parents in the University of Massachusetts/Boston English Family Literacy Project dealt with developing a framework for family literacy programs which focused on family strengths. The staff listened to and talked with participants about literacy in their lives. They also consulted research, and noted a gap between research and implementation. From a collaborative effort, guidelines emerged which led to a distinction between deficit and wealth views of literacy within families. This important research serves as a touchstone to educate and inform practice in family literacy programs which serve ESL families.

Another study focusing on ESL families dealt with the attitudes of six Mexican-American families toward the education of their children. This research was conducted by Concha Delgado-Gaitan (1992) through interviews and observation of parent-child interactions. It was designed to explore the emotional climates within the families which helped to reveal motivations for feeling as they did about education. The study results indicated all the parents wanted their children to succeed in

school, and that they provided a home environment that accommodated their desire for success. The parents sought help from relatives, co-workers, and church friends in school-related matters. They believed that manners and respect were as integral to education as book learning. Family stories rooted in Mexican life were important to them for instilling a moral foundation. From this study, relevance for classroom practice indicated schools needed to be aware of the use of oral histories and storytelling as an important aspect of the culture.

The funds of knowledge research dealing with strategies, abilities, ideas and practices carried out in households of Spanish-speaking families provided teachers with valuable information with which to enhance their perspectives of literacy (Gonzalez, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzales & Amanti, 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992). The research influenced their curriculum and classroom practices. Although more specifically aimed at classroom improvement, this research relates to family literacy concerns because it recognizes the significance of family in literacy acquisition. In funds of knowledge research, teachers made home visits to learn more about home practices and mesh them with classroom strategies to provide more appropriate cross-cultural instruction. The effect of this melding enabled classrooms to transcend rote-like instruction while becoming more culturally attuned (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992). The strategic connections between household and classroom described

by Moll et al. identified and categorized knowledge contained in Hispanic households in the border region between Mexico and Arizona. The teacher/researchers gained understandings about their students by learning about the cultural systems of the children within the context of home and community. They were, in effect, exploring the village that participates in the raising of its children. The knowledge contained within these households was broad and diverse. A sample of the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge is depicted in abbreviation in Appendix II.

Researchers studied how household members used their varying funds of knowledge to deal with social and economic circumstances. The social networks that interconnected families offered the opportunity for give and take between households and the larger community. These connections increased the likelihood of well-being for both. This dynamic of sharing within and between families can create a community base that strengthens ties to schools when families are included as part of the curriculum.

Home /School Partnerships

Another area of concentration contained within family literacy is the home/school partnership, also known as parent participation projects (Morrow, Tracey & Maxwell, 1995). These programs, which can be classified under the school practices model, are designed to include parents in literacy activities which support and extend the goals of the

school. They are more likely to involve the reproduction of activities for the home which closely resemble class work. Through partnership, parents become part of the school team and are active participants in striving to meet objectives and goals of the school.

The Bilingual Family Libraries program, piloted by the Chicago Commons Association at two community centers, is an example of a home-school partnership (Morrow, Tracey & Maxwell, 1995). The program served low-income Hispanic families and was the result of a partnership with Reading is Fundamental. Workshops designed to educate parents on prereading, how children learn to read, selecting books, and the importance of reading to children were offered. The pilot program resulted in improved attitudes toward reading observed at the libraries (Morrow, Tracey & Maxwell, 1995).

Another representative program is The Bilingual Programme of the Pajaro Valley School District in California (Ada, 1988). This program focused on Spanish speaking parents who met once a month with teachers to discuss children's literature and original stories they and their children wrote. Alma Flor Ada (1988) felt the best evaluation of the Pajaro Valley experience came from the parents themselves. She described one mother who said she never had any education, only went to school in Mexico for one year, and didn't read or write very well. But she enjoyed seeing that her children were happy. The children would tell her when they brought a flyer home. It would tell when the meeting

was going to be and they would mark it for her on the calendar so that she would remember to come. When the day arrived they would tell her "Hurry up, Mom, it's getting late!" They were learning a lot and that made everyone feel happy (Ada, 1988).

In another example, Ada quotes a father who said he had discovered that his children could write. He also uncovered something personally meaningful--by reading books one can find out many things. Since his children wanted him to read them the stories over and over again, he took them to the public library to look for more books. There he found books about his own culture. He borrowed them, and found out things he never knew about his roots. He learned that he could read, in Spanish, about the history of this country and of other countries (Ada, 1988).

Connecting parents to their own intellectual curiosity created the opportunity for children to observe behaviors that had an effect on how they saw themselves as learners. Personal growth developed in parents and children, which resulted in improved self-esteem. The program motivated parents to be more involved with school activities (Ada, 1988).

Intergenerational Literacy Programs

The third category of family literacy concentration is intergenerational literacy programs. Intergenerational initiatives are meant to improve the literacy of both children and adults (Morrow, 1995; Morrow, Paratore, Gaber, Harrison & Tracey, 1993; Morrow, Tracey &

Maxwell, 1995). A combination of class opportunities designed for both separate parent/child and combined learning activities characterize this type of program. Featured in intergenerational programs are skill development for parents, opportunities to assist parents in practicing literacy skills with their children, and a support group setting for discussions about parenting, life coping skills, and educational goals (Morrow, Paratore, Gaber, Harrison & Tracey, 1993; Roth & Myers-Jennings, 1995). English as a second language instruction is provided in programs designed to meet the needs of populations of differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Intergenerational programs serving ESL families do not follow any prescribed format. Because parents and children are viewed as co-learners, at least part of the instructional time is spent with them working together (Morrow, 1995). As these types of programs developed, it became evident that in many cases parents could best be assisted in helping their children educationally by receiving support for their own literacy development (Quintero & Velarde, 1995; Shanahan, Mulhern & Rodriguez-Brown, 1995; McKee & Rhett, 1995; Goodling 1994). Parallel settings in programs can provide opportunities for separate adult/child instruction to facilitate individual literacy progress and language acquisition. Adults are instructed to improve their literacy skills and to work with their children to help them in their learning (Morrow, Tracey & Maxwell, 1995).

Intergenerational programs serving ESL families are supported through federal, state and local initiatives and are often the products of partnerships between different groups such as universities, public school, early childhood education programs, adult literacy programs, and businesses (Morrow, Tracey & Maxwell, 1995; Morrow, Paratore, Gaber, Harrison & Tracey, 1993).

Intergenerational programs designed to meet the needs of ESL families benefit from curriculums which Auerbach terms as "participatory and based on collaborative investigation of critical issues in family and community life" (1989, p.177). Drawing on ESL participants' interests, knowledge, and experience, intergenerational programs can create learning situations which serve the literacy needs of the participants and also are pertinent to their daily lives (Auerbach, 1989,1995; Gadsen, 1995; Linder & Elish-Piper, 1995; Taylor,1993). Being involved in intergenerational programs can also help to reduce the isolation ESL families may feel from school and the primary language community (Shanahan, Mulhern & Rodriguez-Brown, 1995).

Examples of Intergenerational Literacy Programs

One intergenerational family literacy program serving differing linguistic minority families in Chelsea, Massachusetts is the Intergenerational Literacy Project (Paratore, 1995). This program provides literacy training to parents learning English so they can support their children's learning. The Intergenerational Literacy Project

instruction is planned to achieve three goals: (1) to offer opportunities for adults to read and respond to literacy materials of personal interest; (2) to provide a selection of books, strategies and ideas for adults to share with their children in support of their literacy learning; (3) to organize a forum through which adults can share their family literacy experiences with their friends and teachers, enabling everyone to learn more about uses of literacy in diverse families (Paratore, 1995:39)

ESL and basic skills instruction for parents help them to act as models for their children as they increase their own literacy. Learning to use literacy by reading and writing oral histories, writing letters to friends and relatives or notes to family members, and journal keeping are natural outgrowths of family life employed in increasing literacy and helps children to become aware of how their parents use reading and writing in daily life.

The teaching team of the Intergenerational Literacy Project shows parents of differing languages how to share storybooks with their children. Parents are encouraged to share books in their own first language. However, selection of first language books can be limited. Explanation of how second language books can be shared using the illustrations to assist where language interferes is a helpful strategy in making a broader selection of texts available to families acquiring English.

Because the project has members who speak many different

languages, small cooperative learning groups of the primary language speakers and tutors who speak the primary language are used to introduce new English texts when possible. The large group of 25 or fewer multilinguals reconvenes to discuss the multiple perspectives that ultimately arise from such diversity. The whole class then participates in reading the text in English.

In describing the understandings gained from this highly diverse program, Jean Paratore (1995) highlighted these findings:

1. The types of literacy activities that parents and caregivers choose to practice are largely dictated by the circumstances within their lives, with literacy events emerging from both their children's school-based assignments and activities and their own interests and needs.
2. Although parents are interested in supporting their children's literacy learning, there is a consistent focus on and desire for self-enhancement.
3. Intergenerational literacy programs provide a valuable opportunity for parents to learn about schools and classrooms and for teachers to learn about parents and family literacies.

The Intergenerational Project has provided fertile experience in implementing and maintaining a successful program that serves the

literacy needs of a highly diverse group of parents and children. It serves as a model of how to assist second language families assimilate through education and language acquisition.

Another intergenerational family literacy program that I am aware of is the Intergenerational Literacy Model Project at El Paso Community College (Quintero and Velarde, 1990). This project was initiated in September, 1986 and expanded with state funding in 1988. It was created to support Spanish-speaking parents who wanted to better their literacy skills to help their children with reading and schoolwork (Quintero & Velarde, 1990). The purposes of this intergenerational model are as follows:

1. To teach parents of preschool and primary-aged children to help their children with reading, and at the same time assist parents in improving their own literacy skills.
2. To provide suggestions of activities that parents can do with their children at home to develop, on a family level, literacy behaviors that will lead to successful literacy development.
3. To encourage parents of young children to seek reading instruction in Spanish and English on an individual basis at least once a week for their own benefit and

ultimately for the benefit of their children.

(Quintero & Velarde, 1990:11)

Hands-on learning activities were planned to make connections between oral and written language. An example of a hands-on activity was a pancake-making activity which provided the context for recipe reading, following steps in order, and animated conversational exchanges regarding unfamiliar equipment such as a wire whisk and electric skillet. Written language extensions of this activity included creating modified recipes and writing short stories about the cooking and eating experience. Other activities planned to meet differing interests and developmental needs included drawing, cutting and pasting, and the use of puzzles and blocks. The use of environmental print to encourage those who may have regarded themselves as unsuccessful readers helped participants to recognize their ability to gather meaning from print (Quintero & Velarde, 1990).

The project reported improved reading skills in both parents and children and an increased level in literacy behaviors. Most beneficial, however, were the new attitudes and lifestyle behaviors displayed by the parents which, in turn, had the effect of enriching their children's lives. Comments from the parents underscore the valuable contribution participation in the program has had in their lives. Participants commented, "I never knew how I would enjoy working with my daughter," "My son will not let me skip reading a book at night and he won't let

me miss a meeting at school," and "I see my daughter asking even more questions than she did before, and now I understand why it's important that I always try to answer her" (Quintero & Velarde. 1990:14).

The effects of this intergenerational family literacy program are reflected in the comments of the parent participants as well as feedback from teachers of the children who participated in the program. Although it may be difficult to ascertain the extent of effects of family literacy programs in quantifiable ways, attempts to evaluate effects have been made. Effects of the Even Start Family Literacy Program on its participants are beginning to be available in the literature as the program enters it's sixth year.

Effects of the Even Start Family Literacy Program

The legislation which created the Even Start Family Literacy Program requires that the U.S. Department of Education conduct an annual national evaluation of the program's effectiveness to supply information to those who are developing family literacy policy. The most recent evaluation available was completed in 1995 (St. Pierre et al., 1995). The portion of the study which had implications for my research dealt with effects of Even Start programs on parent participants.

The findings of the national evaluation were mixed. While there were no significant program effects on the quantifiable variables of income level and employment status (McKee & Rhett, 1995; St. Pierre et al., 1995), the Even Start participants described qualitative changes in

their lives and the lives of their children. Parents described positive attitudes and skill changes such as moving towards educational goals, better employment and being a better parent (St. Pierre et al., 1995). Some effects of the Even Start Family Literacy Program on parents, as noted in the national evaluation, are as follows:

1. Even Start helped many adults attain a GED. Across all 120 projects in the evaluation, 8% of adults who entered Even Start without a GED or diploma achieved one. In a randomized experimental study of a subset of five Even start projects, significantly more adults in Even Start than in the control group attained a GED (22% vs. 6%) [see Chapter 9, pp. 192-198].
2. Adults who participated in Even Start achieved significant positive gains (about 4-5 points or 1/3 of a standard deviation) on the CASAS reading survey (a measure of adult functional literacy in reading), gains which are comparable or greater in size than those observed in other studies of adult education programs. However, families in a control group achieved similar gains [see Chapter 9, pp. 183-192].
3. Even Start did not produce any measurable effects on parenting skills as assessed by self-report measures of the home learning environment, parenting activities,

parental expectations, sense of mastery and depressions, and in-home observations of parent's reading to their children. This could be due to a weakness in our ability to measure these areas, to generally positive parent responses and high self-ratings on a pretest, or to a lack of program effectiveness [see Chapter 10, pp. 202-218].

4. Even Start did not produce any measurable effect on family resources, income or employment. It is unlikely that effects in these areas would be evident in the relatively short time period covered by this study [see Chapter 11, pp. 219-230].

(St. Pierre et al., 1995, p. 2)

The Oklahoma City Public School District was one of two local projects, the other being Webster Groves School District in Rock Hill, Missouri, able to use common data gathered in the national evaluation in conjunction with locally collected data to show how their programs were particularly effective. Consequently, they have been included in the National Diffusion Network which honors projects which have documented evidence of commendable effectiveness (McKee & Rhett, 1995).

The Oklahoma City Public School District included a variety of activities aimed at determining the program's impact on the parents'

literacy, home environment, parenting skills, and overall changes in attitude. The following instruments were used to extend the evaluation of parent participants in the Even Start program:

1. The Gordon Personal Profile (GPP) was administered individually to parents participating in the program. It provided a simply obtained measure of four aspects of personality that were significant in the daily functioning of the normal person, namely ascendancy, responsibility, emotional stability and sociability. The profile yields a measure of self-esteem based on the four trait scores.
2. A Graduate Questionnaire was developed by the Even Start Evaluation Project Director with the cooperation of the Even Start Family Program Supervisor. The purpose for using the questionnaire was to identify the changes which have resulted in the basic life skills of the graduates of the program.
3. A Participant Questionnaire was written by the Even Start Evaluation Project Director in collaboration with the Even Start Family Program Supervisor. The questions were developed to identify the participants' perspective

of the program and its overall effects on their family and literacy skills.

(Richardson, Papesch, Binkley, Franco, & Herrea, 1993)

The Oklahoma City School District evaluation, using national evaluation resources as well as locally prepared measures, was implemented through parent participant interview sessions. The evaluation found the program impacted adults regarding their perception of themselves and their education (Richardson et al., 1993). Conclusions from parent interviews included an appreciation of the supportive learning environment created in the adult education classes, which helped them feel positive about themselves as learners. Their self esteem was enhanced and their view of their capabilities increased through participation in the program. They reported an increase in their own reading, and reading within their families. They indicated that the program provided them with support in all areas of their lives--education, marriage, children and employment. Even Start was selected by 89% of the participants because of the inclusion of the whole family, and 93% of those who had attended other adult education thought Even Start was more effective due to individual attention, hands-on activities, relevance to family and everyday life, and cooperative learning. They cited the following areas of strengthened communication situations: parent-teacher effectiveness, consumer advocacy, and cultural advocacy. Self esteem scores, as measured by Gordon Personality Profile, increased.

All of the participants interviewed had set goals to continue their own education. The evaluation team for the Oklahoma City Even Start Family Literacy Program concluded from these and other findings that the program had positive effects for parent participants in the program (Richardson et al., 1993).

The Learning with East Aurora Families Project (Project LEAF), an Even Start Family Literacy Program in Aurora, Illinois, used interview questionnaires along with the English Language Skills Assessment Test (ELSA) to determine the effects of its adult ESL component. Parents who were pre-and post-tested gained an average of 1.1 in ESL levels. Some typical interview responses from parent participants were: "I have learned more English," "I'm learning English at the same time my children are learning" and "It (the classes) showed me I could do it" (Bercovitz, 1994, p. 8). Interviewing to assess parents' increased parenting skills noted progress. Examples of some interview comments follow: "With this program I learned to communicate with my children," "I learned things about my child and how to take care of my children," and "My home life has changed and so has my mind" (Bercovitz, 1994, p. 9). The evaluation of the LEAF Program indicated positive effects on the parent participants.

Oklahoma City Schools and Project LEAF developed and used measures they felt were particularly helpful for their local evaluation efforts. The national evaluation was not able to identify national

applicability of the effects of the parenting component on the parents' attitudes and behaviors. In their U.S. Department of Education review of the Even Start Family Literacy Program, Patricia McKee and Nancy Rhett (1995) concede that the measures used in the national evaluation to assess parent's attitudes and behaviors were not adequate to reveal changes. They contend that future national studies will need to develop better measurement devices, a view that was also noted by the national evaluation researchers (St. Pierre et al., 1995). Small scale studies such as my inquiry into the effects of the Even Start Family Literacy Program on selected parent participants may be useful in adding to the growing body of information regarding parental attitudes and behaviors.

Summary

Family literacy programs are widely diverse depending on the populations they serve. The commonality among them is that they bring opportunities for intergenerational learning to those they serve. The belief that there is a strong link between home environment and school literacy acquisition has led to an expanded view of the multiple literacies which exist in the homes of culturally diverse and economically disadvantaged families. The funds of knowledge that exist in the homes of those who are outside the mainstream of American life are being viewed in an expanded way to maximize the potential for literacy acquisition through home/school cooperation. Family literacy embraces the ways parents and children use literacy in their homes and

communities and intergenerational activity allows for them to be co-learners. The Even Start Family Literacy Program provided opportunity for study, within my community, to investigate the effects of the program on selected parent participants.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of an Even Start Family Literacy program on selected parent participants. I used the case study approach in order to answer this question. This method allowed for observation of and interaction with participants in the classroom, at the graduation program and in home settings. This chapter is a discussion of the methodology used to collect the data contained in the case studies. The chapter opens with a rationale for my choice of the case study approach. It continues with a description of the research settings and sites. An introduction of the three parent participants, explaining why they were selected, follows. The chapter ends with a discussion of techniques used for data collection and analysis.

Case Study Rationale

The case study approach was best suited for my purposes of investigating the effects of the Even Start Family Literacy Program on selected parent participants. I wanted to find out, from the participants themselves, how they were experiencing the program. I chose to do this through the use of formal and informal interviews over a four month period of time. I wanted to understand the meaning this program had for the participants I interviewed. Since I do not speak Spanish, parent

participants were selected for their understanding of and emerging fluency in English. I developed three case studies grounded in classroom observation and home-based interviews which serve to tell the stories of how Delia, Juanita, and Berta experienced the Even Start Family Literacy Program.

Research Sites and Settings

During the course of my research, I collected data in the schools where the program met, in the homes of the selected participants and at the graduation program, which was the culmination of the program activities for the school year.

Schools

The Even Start Family Literacy Program I observed met twice weekly in a two-semester school year. I began my observations at the beginning of the second semester in February, 1996. Classes met in school cafeterias and kindergarten rooms of schools in the south San Francisco Bay Area.

Using the case study approach allowed me to become a familiar presence in the adult classroom, which occupied the cafeteria on Tuesday and Thursday late afternoons. I was able to observe the interactions of the women I had selected for my case studies with their class peers and with their own children during pre- and post-class time. I also was able to observe several times in the kindergarten classroom during the PACT activity time.

Homes

Entering into the selected parent participants' homes for the purpose of interviewing provided an added dimension of humanness to my research. These women were not research subjects, but people with lives outside of the classroom. They were willing to open this wider perspective to me in the familiar surroundings of their own homes. All of the parent participants expressed initial concern over the fluency of their English, but in their personal environments they were at ease and willing to converse with me.

Graduation Program

On June 18, 1996, a graduation program was held in the cafeteria of one of the Even Start Family Literacy school sites. Families of the participants, teachers from the children's schools, school district personnel and community leaders were invited to attend. Each of the classes read aloud and enacted one of the books they had read during the semester. The participants were publicly acknowledged for completing the Even Start Family Literacy Program year, and were presented with certificates of program participation signed by a local Congresswoman. This activity provided the opportunity for me to observe the culmination of the school year and witness the pride of accomplishment the participants displayed.

The Participants

This study concentrates on three parent participants in an Even

Start Family Literacy Program in a south San Francisco Bay Area school district. I selected the subjects from referrals directed to me by parent advocates at the program sites. I asked them to recommend participants whose English was at a level fluent enough to answer my interview questions in English. Each of the four parent advocates agreed to assist in my request by suggesting two participants who expressed interest in talking with me. Working with this initial group, I conducted seven introductory interviews in locations that included the classroom, the school ground and participants' homes.

Based on the initial interview experience, I narrowed the focus to four women who responded in understandable English to my interview questions. They were initially a bit self-conscious, but overcame early anxieties they felt about their English. I explained I was conducting a study in which I wanted to learn about the effects of the Even Start Family Literacy Program on participants. Since I was limited by my ability to speak only English, I needed to find parent participants who could answer my questions in English. I selected three parent participants in order that I could have the time and opportunity to adequately observe and interview them. The parent participants I selected seemed pleased to have the opportunity to practice English by being in conversation with me. The parent participants are reasonably representative of the larger Even Start Family Literacy population in the south San Francisco Bay Area school district in which they are located in that they are natives of

Mexico, have preschool children at home, and attend the program without their husbands. Pseudonyms are used to shield their identities.

Delia

Delia is the attractive young mother of a kindergarten daughter and a preschool son. Her initial manner was quite reserved, but as she felt at ease talking with me she relaxed and showed a genuine cordiality. Originally from Sonora, Mexico, she is married to an American who speaks Spanish fluently. Spanish is the language of the home. Delia is interested in finding employment outside of the home but is conflicted about how to arrange child care.

Juanita

Juanita is an affable woman with a gregarious manner. She has the kind of face that sparkles when she smiles and gives the impression of being a basically happy person. Her easy laughter, by her own admission, sometimes masks nervousness when she is unsure of herself. Juanita is the mother of six children. Their ages range from preschool to high school. Her children all speak English, even though Spanish is the language she chooses to use in the home. She is genuinely surprised and baffled that even her young daughters speak English with relative ease. Her husband also speaks English daily in his work. Juanita is a native of Durango, Mexico.

Berta

Berta is a very pleasant, congenial young woman. She has two

preschool sons and was in the eighth month of her third pregnancy at the time of our conversations. Her husband, who is fifteen years her senior, speaks English at work but talks to her in Spanish. Berta came to the United States from Guadalajara, Mexico to be married. She is currently selling cosmetics through home sales, but would like to work as a tax consultant from her home. She is interested in home-schooling her children.

The three women who are the parent participants selected to help me investigate the effects of the the Even Start Family Literacy program on their lives are all mothers who are interested in the progress their children are making in school and the Even Start Family Literacy Program. All three indicated they view education as an important facet of their own lives and the lives of their family members.

Data Collection

The case studies incorporate information from classroom observation, and participant interviews.

1. Classroom Observation

I observed the Even Start Family Literacy Program in a south San Francisco Bay Area school district, attending classes with participants for a period of four months. Class sessions met on Tuesdays and Thursdays from late afternoons into early evening. Generally, the schedule called for separated parent/child study on Tuesdays and Parent and Child Together activities (PACT) on Thursdays. The PACT activity time was

rotated between the cafeteria, where the parental classes were held, and the children's kindergarten classroom. When the PACT activities were held in the kindergarten classroom, the children chose which activities they and their parent would pursue. The choices might include, puzzles, working with clay, cut and paste activities, sharing a book, or role playing in the play house. The PACT activities in the adult classroom were adult-directed, having been planned by the parent advocate to coincide with the book studied for the week. These activities might include making a page for the family book, a color, cut, and paste project creating a take home reminder of the day's lesson, or role play activities involving the current book. I was able to observe the different settings, take notes, and decide on subject selection through these observations.

During the time I spent in class, I kept notes on the activities and interactions I observed. These included parent advocate-directed ESL lessons, small group ESL activities,³ whole group interaction ESL activities,⁴ PACT activities in both classrooms settings, and interaction among class members before and after class. The Awards Ceremony held June 18, 1996, in which all the participating families from the program sites were recognized and feted, also furnished material for my research notes. The ceremony added another dimension for observing

³ An example of a small group ESL activity involves three or four participants helping each other to decide which of the characters in the book they are reading they identify with the most and why. They then report their conclusions to the large group in English.

⁴ One example of a whole group ESL activity involves each participant having a slip of paper with an English sentence which must be read and traded with each other member of the group.

the selected parent participants in a different environment.

2. Interviews

In the late Spring of 1996, after I had been attending the Even Start Family Literacy Program twice weekly since February, I selected three parent participants from referrals given to me by the programs' parent advocates. The women suggested to me all had sufficient English understanding and speaking skills to be in conversation with me.

After an introductory interview to choose the parent participants, I began to interview each of the selected parent participants. Under the guidance of the research questions, I conducted the series of three formal interviews per parent participant over an eight-week period in late spring and early summer of 1996. I chose the three interview process as a way of understanding the experience of the participants and to gain insight into the meaning they made of the experience (Seidman, 1991). The choice of three interviews allowed for the meaning to accumulate over time.

While my intention was to hold the interviews over three successive weeks, I was able to complete that goal with only one of the participants. Unexpected conflicts arose for another of the participants which expanded the time between interviews to two weeks. The third participant requested that the culminating interview be rescheduled a week later than we had planned due to her son's graduation from middle school.

All of the interviews were held at participants' kitchen tables, which provided the space to set up my tape recorder and lay out my notebooks. It also provided a natural setting to converse and share our stories. Visiting with each other and sharing my personal story of interest in family literacy programs provided a way for me to supply more insight to the women of how our work together was meaningful. I am convinced there is real value in the interview process between native English speakers and emerging English speakers. While it may be preferable to use a common native language, the reality in California today makes this increasingly difficult to achieve. Meaning-making between native and non-native English speakers is valuable for data gathering and the learning experience.

Initial questions dealt with getting acquainted queries about home and family, for example, How long have you lived in this city?, What to you like/dislike about living here?, What are the names and ages of your children?, Tell me something special about each of them., and other questions in a similar vein. I wanted to make connections between us that would help me determine the understanding the participants had of my questions. I encouraged them to ask me to repeat or restate anything they weren't sure they understood and reiterated that my interest was in their personal views.

Ultimately, the original interview served to begin a new relationship with the participants. I explained to them that I was

conducting research in order to complete requirements for a degree and that while they saw our interviews as a way to gain additional practice with an English speaker, they were, in reality, participating in research. I assured them of anonymity through the use of pseudonyms and invited them to join me in discovering ways in which the Even Start Family Literacy program influenced their lives.

The interviews were all conducted and audio-taped at the homes of the selected participants and were generally 45 minutes to one hour in length. Preschool children were present during the interview time and the mothers usually occupied them with watching television. A list of the interview questions used during the conversations is located in Appendix I.

Data Analysis

The parent participant case studies were developed from compiling data collected from field notes and audio-tape transcriptions. The data were then examined for meaningful patterns (Bogdan & Biklin, 1982; Seidman, 1991; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Careful attention was paid to noticing connections within and between interviews as the process unfolded. I was also conscious of being alert in connections to the literature I had reviewed. All decisions regarding the case studies were filtered through my perception of the data analysis process.

After transcribing the audio-tapes, the transcriptions were carefully

read to develop an understanding of the collected information. The data were then coded according to categories developed from the first reading (Bogdan & Biklin, 1982; Seidman, 1991; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The initial categories were widely divergent and reflected my inexperience with the coding process. The categories developed during this first phase were family, work, school, perceptions, personal feelings and strategies. These very broad categories served as repositories to collect and connect pieces of data that could be additionally refined. Family, school, and work dealt with externals, the obvious outward subdivisions of daily life. Perceptions, personal feelings, and strategies stored information that dealt with internals, the feelings, emotions, actions and reactions used in living daily life. Upon further review and refinement, dominant themes connecting the external and internal aspects of the data to the effects of the program on the participants began to emerge.

Further coding of the responses of the interviewees provided areas where insight into the ways the Even Start Family Literacy Program influenced parts of their lives could be identified by participant statements. Making connections from the transcribed audio tapes to the observation field notes was helpful to tie together what I'd seen and written with what I heard and recorded from the interviewees.

The themes relative to influences of the Even Start Family Literacy Program on participants, which emerged from the categories that were

frequently occurring, will be explored in the case studies and are as follows:

1. Increased interest in learning English resulting from the adult ESL environment
2. Support in assisting their children's learning
3. Enhanced sense of self
4. Heightened interest in furthering own education

Summary

The goal of the three interview process was to learn how the selected parent participants experienced their Even Start Family Literacy involvement and made meaning of it for their lives (Bogdan & Biklin, 1981; Seidman, 1991; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The reliability and validity of the three interview structure is enhanced by several features. Primarily, it places participant comments in the context of daily life. This interview structure proposes interviewing over several weeks to account for days which may not follow a normal pattern and to check for internal consistency. One way to check this consistency is by noting if what is being said in a succeeding interview is in fundamental harmony to what has been previously discussed. Providing the participants with a copy of the transcript for review to see if they acknowledge the transcription as their intended meaning is another way to check internal consistency. Copies of interview transcripts were provided to the parent participants in this study. Further, by interviewing several participants, experiences can

be compared and connected with those of the others (Seidman, 1991).

The choice of a qualitative, participatory research mode was influenced by my interest in understanding how the selected parent participants viewed their participation in the Even Start Family Literacy Program. As a researcher, my subjective interpretations were influenced by my observations, interview questions, and interactions with the women who were participants in the study. The emergent nature of this type of participatory research requires that the researcher approach the process openly, willing to learn from what arises from the process.

Chapter Four

A Description of an Even Start Class

The Even Start Family Literacy Program Setting

It is lovely, mild, mid-March afternoon when I arrive in the parking lot at one of the south San Francisco Bay Area schools in which the Even Start Family Literacy Program is located. There are few cars left. One is being loaded with boxes by a teacher with a good deal of work ahead of her. I walk by the empty Kindergarten play yard and enter the chain link fenced area that leads to the back entrance of the multi-purpose room. The doors are open wide to take advantage of the exceptional late winter weather. Passing through the doorway, I enter the large tiled room that serves as the lunchroom, auditorium and pseudo-gymnasium. Most of the lunch tables are folded away, but several are aligned in a three-sided arrangement with a white board forming the fourth side of a rectangle. Tables by the windows have materials for class activities and books with tapes in zip lock bags that will be checked out by participants as they arrive. The parent advocate is busy preparing for the late afternoon class. She greets me and invites me to look over the materials on the table which will be used during class time. Outside the windows the playground is a busy place with young children whizzing by on bicycles and a group of men older than school age playing volleyball. The school yard seems well used as a neighborhood gathering place.

The first few participants arrive separately with preschool and school age children in company. The children race across the tile floor creating echoes in the spacious room with their feet and voices. There are several steps leading up to the stage they must cross to enter the door of the kindergarten room which serves as their classroom. They must be played on before the children disappear into doorway. Meanwhile, the mothers are attending to filling out the attendance record and checking out new materials by signing their names to library checkout cards. Some return materials they have had for the previous week. They greet each other and visit in Spanish as they move to the prearranged tables and seat themselves. Some begin copying the vocabulary for the new book that is to be introduced this session from the list on the white board. Others, who seem better acquainted, continue to visit as they take out their notebooks and pencils.

The parent advocate greets those present in Spanish and begins the class by drawing attention to the vocabulary on the white board. The total vocabulary of the new book has been written out. The English words are displayed in red with the Spanish translation alongside in green. *Red-rojo, hen-gallina, now-ahora, them/they-ellos, eat-comer, then-entonces/luego*. The words fill the board. The parent advocate pronounces the English word and asks those present to repeat after her pronunciation. Those assembled repeat in unison and write the word in their notebooks. The parent advocate asks for the Spanish translation.

Sometimes it is volunteered. If not, the parent advocate supplies the word or words that reasonably translate. At times there are discussions as to shades of meaning, confusion in terms, and misunderstandings. While the group activity proceeds, with the parent advocate alternately asking questions in Spanish and English, late arrivals enter and children scamper noisily across the room, up the stairs, and across the stage to their classroom. The mothers go about their attendance and check in procedure and join the group in session. Some have babies in strollers with them even though there is a babysitting room for children under 3 years old. Half an hour after the beginning of class time the assembled group numbers 10 out of a usual 15/16. Within 45 minutes everyone has arrived and joined the group. The parent advocate continues with the vocabulary lesson, greeting and including members as they settle in and begin writing to catch up. An unhappy girl from the kindergarten room arrives crying. Her mother attends to her and she chooses to stay with the adults.

When the vocabulary work is finished, after about 30 minutes, the parent advocate introduces the new book, *The Little Yellow Chicken*, and leads a choral reading. The words have already been reviewed and pronounced, but because they are in combination, the reading is deliberately slow. Of the 16 present only three or four are actively reading aloud with the parent advocate. Others seem intent on following the page, but are not reading out loud. One or two appear to be

distracted and are not following along. Outside, the noise from the volleyball court where the men are playing occasionally crescendos when points are won or lost and some of the women turn to see which team is celebrating. When the choral read through has finished, a page by page question and answer procedure, in both English and Spanish, begins. The parent advocate asks an English question, "How many verbs are on page two?" The women who were reading along are able to answer the question easily. The verbs and their Spanish translation are listed. *Thought-penso, have-tener, said-dijo, shopping-de compras, laughed-rieron, do-hacer*. Some women keep their eyes downcast in what appears to be an effort not to be asked to participate, but it doesn't always work for them. The parent advocate carefully walks them through the question in English and if they are unable to answer, helps them construct an English sentence that answers the question (e.g., Question: Who has to do the shopping? Answer: I have to do the shopping, or Rosaelva has to do the shopping, or my husband has to do the shopping, or any variation that reasonably answers the question). The difference in English fluency becomes obvious to me at this point. Each participant has an opportunity to answer English questions and ask questions in Spanish for clarification.

Following the question/answer session the parent advocate leads a discussion about some questions she posed about the story and how they may pertain to the participants' own family situation. The dialogue

revolves around home responsibilities and helping out. During this time, the conversation is in Spanish and most everyone has something to contribute about the similarities or differences of their own situations. The parent advocate finishes this ESL portion of the session and side conversations begin as the mothers go to the supply table to gather what they will need for the PACT project to be shared with their child. Since most of the mothers have more than one child in the program, a rotation system exists so that a mother and one child can share a project one-on-one. On occasion, during the PACT time, the mothers will go to the children's classroom where the child may select the activities they do together. This class session, the children are coming to the multi-purpose room to share a culminating project related to the book they read for the past week.

The classroom door on the stage opens and the children burst out, tramping across the floorboards, down the stairs, and scurrying over the tiles to the tables where their respective mothers are seated. The once subdued tone of the cavernous room reverberates with the energy of the youngsters. They range in age from three to seven and display their exuberance with ease. Siblings who are not in the rotation this class time remain in the kindergarten room with the child advocate and helpers for other activities.

The youngest children have some difficulty attending to the project task of cutting and gluing head dresses depicting characters in the book.

The parent advocate has finished examples on hand at the table with the supplies. Lalo's mother calls him repeatedly as he rushes around the room in his noisy cowboy boots. "Lalo! Lalo! Lalo!" He returns for short periods of time and then explodes across the room again. Alex occasionally joins him in a run. Alex's mother is intent on cutting and does not call out to him since he returns when Lalo chooses to answer his mother's call. Another of the preschool boys is uninterested in the cutting activity, but is captivated with unscrewing the glue sticks until the sticks fall off. His exasperated mother eventually notices his diversion and fixes the sticks. She then provides paper and crayons for her young son, which prove temporarily interesting. The older children, both boys and girls, seem more interested in the cutting activity and busy themselves conferring with their mothers on how to assemble the varying head dresses. The mothers, too, appear to enjoy the activity. Some are interacting cooperatively with their children and some are proceeding without the interest of their children. The room is alive with the bustle of activity.

The parent advocate advises the group that they need to finish and clean up within 10 minutes, as the end of class time is approaching. Some parent/child duos are finished and the children are parading around in their hats. Other pairs, mostly cases where the younger boys have been uninterested, have a lot of work to do. Soda, salsa and chips are set out. Those who are finished help themselves and visit while the

others pack up unfinished projects to be finished either at home or before class time next session. The parent advocate reminds those who need to return books and tapes from the previous week to bring them to the next session. The new tapes and books will be taken home this day to listen to and read with each other. Children from the kindergarten classroom now join the assembled group and rush to get some soda and chips. Groups form at tables where the mothers bring the small children drinks and snacks. The room is filled with voices visiting with one another and children calling out to each other. The class finishes after two and a half hours of ESL, shared activity, group discussion, pleasant visiting, and sharing a snack. The family groups move out into the early dusk of a balmy, late winter evening.

Chapter Five

Delia, Juanita, and Berta: Three Case Studies

Introduction

Case studies of three parent participants in the Even Start Family Literacy Program are presented in this chapter. Each of the participants was selected as a result of an interview process in which it was determined enough English fluency was present to ensure understanding and meaningful dialogue for both interviewer and interviewee. Delia, Juanita, and Berta agreed to take part in my investigation of the effects of an Even Start Family Literacy Program. Having observed and interacted peripherally with these women in the classroom setting for two and a half months, I was ready to enter into an expanded relationship with them to explore program effects on their lives. The following case studies examine the themes which emerged from the interviews relating to the influence of the Even Start Family Literacy Program on the participants' lives. These themes are: increased interest in learning English, assisting in their children's learning, an emerging sense of self and interest in furthering their own educations.

DELIA

Delia is the young mother of Jasmine, age 6, and Jackie, age 3. A woman with a quietly reserved manner, she is a twin from a family of nine

daughters and one son. Her twin sister lives in Hayward. The other siblings have scattered in California and Mexico. Her widowed father continues to live in Sinaloa and she worries about him living alone. She tries to make the trip to Mexico once a year and would like to go this summer, but she is unsure of her travel circumstances at the present time.

Delia is married to an American who lived at times in Mexico and France and speaks three languages as a result. He speaks Spanish fluently. It is the language of the home. They moved to San Jose as a consequence of his job, but they are unsatisfied with the expense of the area. Recently he has spoken of a possible move to Texas. Delia has not made connections with other women in her housing complex and talks about feeling isolated in her home. She wants to improve her English and is glad to have the opportunity to attend the Even Start Family Literacy Program both as a way to learn more English and to interact with others. Her English is deliberate and carefully thought out before she speaks, causing her to feel embarrassment when she feels her replies take too long.

Interest in Learning English

According to Delia, her English has progressed since she began adult education English classes in Modesto two years ago, but she remains nervous in English-speaking situations even though her understanding is good. She told of the decision to speak Spanish in the

home for family unity and to avoid spousal tension, as the following comments illustrate:

You know what my husband said to me, um, "I know you can speak a lot but you don't want to." He tell me that in Spanish. He don't speak English to me. He tell me I'm lazy but really I get (long pause) what is that word?

Embarrassed? I get embarrassed. I can understand when I read a book, but sometimes that is easier than to talk! If we buy something and something is wrong to take to the store and go back is not easy for me. I have my husband do it.

While Delia indicated she lacked confidence when speaking English to strangers, she overcame that anxiety to converse with me. She is also acutely aware of the need to speak better English in order to be employed. Our conversations would often segue into the need for her to begin preparing to seek employment. This need was a primary motivator for her to be involved with the Even Start Family Literacy Program as it was the only place known to her where she could learn and practice English. Her comments about the gap between her understanding and speaking ability illustrate her awareness of what she feels is necessary--more English.

The other day and I don't remember what day it was came another lady and they took test. I went first. She said you can pronounce, you can understand, but you give the right

answer but you say like my arm. (Delia demonstrates a limp arm) You speak like my arm. So we need learn speak more English.

At the present time, Delia's choices for obtaining English instruction are limited by her lack of transportation and information about available classes. She is seeking, and Even Start is providing, English instruction, which is beneficial for her present life circumstances. She does have an understanding that as a family literacy program, the goals of Even Start are different from the goals of the adult education class she previously attended. The former course featured a more structured, verb conjugation method of instruction. She liked that method and showed me her books. However, she is resolute in wanting an increase in English instruction, as the following comments reveal:

N: Would you like to add anything, like, boy, I wish we could do more of this?

D: Um, more English.

N: You would like more English.

D: Learn speak more English, because we know Spanish. We want to learn English. We have to learn to speak, write English.

N: So that would be something you would add to the program.

D: That help with practice.

In Delia's case, The Even Start Family Literacy Program ESL component is different from her previous, instruction class. Still, she is appreciative of the convenience of location of Even Start, which is located at her neighborhood school: "From here to school it's like 10 minutes because I walk to school." Even though her experience served to imprint what she prefers in an English class, she indicated she likes the Even Start classes stating, "But, you know I like the class. That teacher, she's very nice." Her present anxiety about employment compels her to seek ESL instruction. The fortunate combination of adult and children's classes addresses her child care concerns, while providing opportunity to increase her understanding of how to beneficially interact with her children for literacy and language acquisition.

Assisting Children's Learning

Delia is very proud of her children and is especially pleased with Jasmine's progress in school. Her husband had Jasmine removed from a bilingual Kindergarten and placed in an English only class based on his strong belief that she would learn best by this placement.

When she start for the first month she was in that (bilingual) class, but my husband went to the principal asked to change to only English. Because he said that (if) she knows read English she, um, she can read Spanish when she knows the meaning. He wants her only English.

Delia agreed with his decision, indicating the most important factor in Jasmine's education was learning English. The family position is that Spanish is for the home and public school is for learning English.

She enjoys reading the English storybooks provided by Even Start with Jasmine and does so nightly as their shared homework program. Sometimes Jasmine will correct Delia's pronunciation. This has surprised and pleased Delia. Mother and daughter act as co-learners when Jasmine, in turn, asks Delia what an English word means in Spanish. Delia reports, "When she doesn't understand some words, what it means the words in English, she ask me what it means in Spanish." Since this is Jasmine's first year in school, Delia is learning to help her practice writing the alphabet at home. This home interaction is one effect the Even Start program encourages and Delia adopts. She is pleased that Jasmine likes school. Since the Even Start program is held at Jasmine's school site, she looks upon the program as an extension of her kindergarten experience. Delia's pride in her children's beginning accomplishments is evident in the following comments:

She knows a lot. She speaks in Spanish but now she knows a lot of English, Jackie too. And when I say some words wrong, she tells me that. The other kids, they don't write their name. Her name has more letters and she can know how to write it. She know all the letters. She different. I think she doing more things. She like to do

pictures and practice ABC's, the colors, the numbers. She like school.

I was interested to in knowing more about Delia's encounters with Jasmine in the Even Start Family Literacy Program. She responded to my queries about PACT activities, and shared her thoughts on Jasmine's attitude toward the program:

Every Thursday they come and just one time go there. I like work with Jasmine, but the other parents talk a lot. I (guess?) they don't have, I don't know what, attention? Attention. When ah, we have to do work with our children. I um, when I went with Jasmine, when they are saying you have to do this work with Jasmine, she tell me do something and I do it with her. We did the book with the little girl, Goldilocks. We did three bears, three chairs, three bowls, three spoons, and Goldilocks. She color it and she like to do that. We play when we're reading. Jackie was baby bear, Jasmine was Goldilocks and I everything other! She like that.

Delia's involvement with the Even Start Family Literacy Program has influenced her involvement with Jasmine in the learning process that both mother and daughter have enjoyed. She believes it has been beneficial to them both.

Emerging Sense of Self

Even though Delia continues to feel intimidated in English only situations, she gives herself credit for being motivated in pursuing her goal of more fluent English. Her positive attitude is apparent when she compares herself to classmates, stating, "When the teacher answering something, no, no, asking something, I saw when they want to give the answer they start to give the answer, but with one word. I try to think and I start to give more words ." She considers herself a good student and applies herself to the Even Start curriculum. Her participation in the Even Start program makes a difference in her life because she feels she is participating in self improvement:

OK, um I think I am a good student. Ah, but I need, I like to have more school to practice all the letters I need and because I like the language and I want to do better. Something different and something you need.

Preparing for the graduation award ceremony, inspired her to intensify how much reading she did at home. Delia was very aware that there would be attention focused on each group making a presentation and she was determined to do her best:

Now we draw the animals. I think it is sheep and the kids gonna carry the paper with the animals. She say (Jasmine) she want to get this (the sheep) because I paint that. I ask Margarita, "I want to be something." She say, "No you

gonna read. I need you cause you gonna read!" So I have to practice. I don know if I gonna do by myself because when we are reading they don stop (for punctuation), they keep reading. I dunno. I gonna practice!

Delia did not read by herself, but hers was the lead voice that spoke loudly and clearly and responded to all the punctuation marks. She proudly accepted the certificate of completion and the citation from the local Congresswoman's representative for participating with her two children in the 1995-96 Even Start Family Literacy Program .

Interest in Furthering Own Education

Delia's interest in furthering her own education is apparent in her strong sense of taking advantage of the opportunities that are available to her at present. Her primary motivator appears to be the need to earn money which, she determines, is inextricably linked to speaking English. From adult education classes in Modesto to the Even Start Family Literacy Program in San Jose, she is taking advantage of the opportunities that fit in with her life situation. At present, this includes small children. She is uncomfortable about arranging child care, stating, "I think I need, um, another person who came and stayed here with my daughter and son. Yeah and uh, (long pause, sigh) I don know." I asked her to think about what her life might be like when Jackie, now 3, enters school in two years.

Um, I like to do some part time work or work part time and go

to school and because at home the work is the same all days and I want something else. I think I gonna do that. I wanna go to school for more English and training. Something easy, not hard. Something like I don know because there are lots of things.

Delia may not be clear about exactly what she may choose to do in the future, but she is clear that it will require more English. Her present involvement with the Even Start Family Literacy Program provides her with a link to English that she would not otherwise have at this time.

JUANITA

Juanita is a woman with an easy manner about her that may be a consequence of her being the mother of six children. They range in age from preschool to high school. Her long, dark hair frames an animated face that is dominated by unusually green eyes. She is given to laughter easily and is aware that sometimes this is a nervous response. Juanita has lived in San Jose for 17 years, coming here from Durango, Mexico. She has fond memories of her childhood, but regrets that she only had the opportunity to go to grade school. Her husband, a cement contractor, speaks English, as do all of her children, even though Spanish is the language of the home. She seems genuinely baffled at the ease with which her young daughters seem to pick up English from the TV and their siblings. Juanita stays home with her children and is very concerned for their well being. She is interested in concentrating on her own

continuing education after her youngest child enters school next year. She feels ready to step out of the isolation of her home and address some of her own wants and needs.

Interest in Learning English

Juanita began in the Even Start Family Literacy Program two years ago when she was approached by the parent advocate for the program and encouraged to participate. She felt it was time for her to address her need for English, since she was the one in the family who had the least familiarity with the language. She had no previous English instruction before coming to Even Start:

I move to the United States in 1979 and, ah, I started in English only two years ago. In Even Start. Olga call me one day and she told me that the opportunities for me and, ah, I can't attend regular school, you know? And, ah, this program she told me about this program and I talk and I called Olga and I can go. I can't go to the school, you know because I have too much children and, ah, I help my children and it's busy for me, too hard. I want to go to the school, you know regular school, but I am very happy with this program.

Juanita's interest in learning English is generated by her need to communicate with her increasingly bilingual family. It also extends to interaction with the English-speaking community.

You know that my little girls, they speak English now! More English than Spanish! And I talk with the girls only in Spanish. Sometime in English if Pedro, Manuel, don't listen to me, I try to speak in English. The English, you know what, he understand me! Everybody understand me, yeah! If I have emergency, oh my God, my English is very good. Believe me or not, but my English, I speak very good English when I have emergency. I don't know what happen to me. Maybe nervous, maybe. I don't know. Yeah. Because I told the doctor I need a translator for some Spanish. No, nobody speaks the Spanish. OK, I try to say in English and you understand my English? Oh, yes! If I speak English, Even Start is a lot of help. In everything. In English and make something to this, make something to that, and talking to my kids.

Juanita is enthusiastically aware of the part which Even Start has played in assisting her English skills. She also is appreciative of the opportunity to be out in the community visiting with her classmates as it breaks the routine and isolation of being only at home. The Even Start program is making a difference in her daily life by providing the opportunity for English acquisition in a social situation, which Juanita enjoys.

Assisting Children's Learning

Juanita views her full time task as caring for and helping her children. She is keenly aware that the opportunities that exist for them are strikingly different than what was available for her as a child. Her obvious pleasure in the accomplishment of her children reflects back to her role as primary helper:

It's very different for my kids. Because when I'm little, I can't go to the school. I only to sixth grade because no more schools and there is only one school. I want to go to another school, but it is very difficult because there is only one transport and the money. It is very, very, very different with my kids because they have everything, yeah. The schools is around my home, you see. The Chula Vista High, the Morris, the Fargo is close, too. I think that my kids need only my help. Because I push 'em. I push and I'm happy because I don't have a problem with the kids, no. Not a problem. Yes, and I told my old kids, my old son and he listen to me and he understand me and he say, oh poor my Mom. I help you Mommy. . . .My English is not very good, but I'm trying. Is important for me, is important for everybody help. Is important for my children because tomorrow they help everybody. My kids starting on the future. You understand me? If my children go to school is

help for my children tomorrow. You understand? Because I feel very sad because I no receive school and I stay only home and I don't want my kids to stay with me, you know? Go to school, listen to your teacher and work very hard. This help them.

Juanita appreciates the opportunity to work individually with her daughters who are in the Even Start Family Literacy Program. They read the books at home together, and on alternate Thursdays each girl has an opportunity to participate in a activity with their mother on a one-to-one basis.

I like opportunity to work with my children and if I don't work the one time, I can work another time. I work separate. I work with Blanca, next week I work with Irma, yes. They like the coloring and I like playing with the girls. And I practice my English with them. My girls are very different. Blanca work. She not looking around, she working. Irma, she's looking around and listen outside. I say you write here. "OK, Mommy," and she dancing and playing. I look in the face and say, "Irma, concentrate." "OK, Mommy." She's too much energy! She interested too much in song, singing and dancing, only moving! My older girl, she love too much working with me, yeah. She's having imagination. If I doing something, she doing faster than me! She teach me. Oh,

she love Even Start. You know two weeks ago I'm very sick. You know my kids crying because they want to go to the Even Start. But I say," Mihija I can't go." "Mommy, Mommy, let me." She bring me water and another girl she want to bring me the Sprite. "Wake up and go!" I'm crying, "Come on girls, leave me alone!" Yeah, they are very, very happy at Even Start and helps me to practice English.

Juanita's primary role of helper to her children is augmented by the family participation in the Even Start Family Literacy Program. She sees the value of the program in their daily lives. Her high school son acts as a helper in the kindergarten, which pleases her greatly and demonstrates the influence of the program on their family life. Juanita connects the family's Even Start involvement to their future, when she projects that they will help others with the education they have received, both from public schooling and the Even Start Family Literacy Program.

Emerging Sense of Self

Juanita's affable nature displays itself in glimpses of self pride and astonishment at her own accomplishments.

N: I have to say that I am very impressed with the way people I have spoken to are very committed to learning English. I know it is a very hard thing.

R: Oh, yes. It's very hard, but in Spanish "Si se puede," yes. I can do it! (laughs)

N: Oh, I like that! It's a very important attitude to have. Now in your house, your children speak English. Does your husband speak English?

R: Oh, yeah. He speak English. He speak with my children, too. I speak only Spanish.

N: No you don't, you're speaking English right now!

R: (Surprised laughter) Oh, yes!!! (We have a good laugh)

N: My goodness, you have a feeling that you speak only Spanish, but you really are an English speaker. Look at that!

R: (Sighs) I try, I try. (laughs)

Juanita speaks of feeling badly about mispronunciation and misinterpretation of meaning with her English speech. She relates an anecdote involving her oldest son who often stays up later than she in order to finish his homework. Every night she reminds him to turn off the "life" before going to bed. No one in her family corrects her. After a time, she notices him smirking when he says that he will turn off the "life," so she questions her husband. He finally corrects her mistake to "light." She feels foolish for the mistake and is upset that no one corrects her early on, but she looks on this story as verification of her progress in English.

Since her family is moving in a bilingual world, Juanita is eager to quicken her pace to keep in step with them. She delights in surprising

them with her knowledge of English in areas they don't expect her to have expertise:

You know what? I know the Pledge of Allegiance. You know, the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. They say, "No, you can't, you no go to school," but I know the Pledge of Allegiance. Yes. And I said, "I can do it!" (She recites the Pledge of Allegiance.)

Preparing for the graduation program, which was a meaningful community intergenerational activity focused on the importance of education, was a time consuming effort for Juanita. She volunteered to make costumes for the production. It called upon her creativity in ways she hadn't expected. She felt a sense of pride and accomplishment, both for her ability in English and her part in helping to produce the presentation.

I work very hard. My machine is no very good, break the needle. Believe it or not, a couple years I not work on machine and Even Start teach to do. Got the material and do something new, you know the flowers and everything, yeah. Years before I say, "Oh no, I can't do that. I can't." And not doing nothing. And now I do!

As Juanita begins to encounter a larger world outside of her home, she is assisted by the Even Start Family Literacy Program by increasing her English skills, being in community with others who share her goals

and tapping into parts of her abilities that may have been dormant or untested.

Interest in Furthering Own Education

Juanita is a woman approaching a transitional stage of life. As she prepares for her oldest child to graduate and her youngest child to begin school, she will have the opportunity to reorder her own life. She is genuinely pleased with her progress, but has an interest in moving beyond the confines of her home to interact with the wider world. She expresses an interest in a job or profession and an interest in returning to school:

I love it too much the school, but I can't go because I have my little ones. But one year more you see me in somewhere. I wanna go to the school everyday. I want to speak very good English. I can do! It is very important the school, well that is my opinion. I want a job or I want a professional like you!

Juanita has the positive approach of "Si, se puede". The Even Start Family Literacy Program has benefited her with English acquisition opportunity, a social outlet, and by helping her recognize abilities, which make her feel good about herself. She has surprised both herself and her family with an increasing command of English and a "can do" attitude.

BERTA

Berta is cherubic looking young mother who appears much younger than her 23 years. Her soft brown curls frame a lovely face that owes it's fullness to the eighth month of pregnancy. Berta is hoping for a girl in her third pregnancy in three years, but thinks it would be nice for the two boys to have a brother. She came to the United States from Guadalajara, Mexico, to marry a man 15 years her senior. Their life together has been difficult financially since the birth of her first son produced significant medical bills. Her husband is presently working two jobs and Berta occasionally sells cosmetics through an in-home demonstration concern. She is frustrated by her spouse's lack of financial acumen, especially since she had some accounting experience when she worked for her father in Mexico. He is unwilling, however, to give her much responsibility for their finances because he thinks she is too young and, most importantly for him, it is his responsibility. Berta has had to move from being a girl to a woman with major responsibilities in a very short span of time. She is open to learning new attitudes, as evidenced in our conversations about Even Start influences on her life. She had no English class instruction before joining the Even Start Family Literacy Program in January of this year. She began as a babysitter for the program and joined as a participant when Miguel finished with his diapers and could join the children's group. Berta and her family are Baptists and are active in a bilingual church. This affiliation provides her

with connections to other women, whom she refers to as “Sisters.” Her actual sister is also in the group and is attentive to Berta, as she is without a phone and close to her delivery time. Berta talks about a willingness to work to improve her situation and sees English as a vital part of her future, both for her ability to be employed from her own home and to home school her children. The Even Start Family Literacy Program is her first step toward achieving those goals.

Interest in Learning English

Berta displays little self consciousness when speaking, even though she thinks her English is not good. Her youthful exuberance allows her to forge ahead or ask for assistance if she is searching for meaning. She agrees with her husband’s assessment that she could do more if she wanted. Because she is home all day, he has an expectation that she could be studying, but she finds it difficult to balance the routine of the children and English study. She has tried videotape instruction, but finds that is not something that motivates her very much. She commented on her language-learning experiences:

My husband say, “If you want to learn English, I know you can do. But you don’t want to because you stay here 4 years. In 4 years I’m speak very good and you don’t want to because you don’t study in the home.” My husband give to me the videos to speak English, but I don’t like. It’s boring. It’s more easy in Even Start. But the videos more difficult

and more attention and SHHHHHH! QUIET! Let me watch!

Listen to me! QUIET! And I can't . I had the video, but never, never watch it. Sometimes one and that's it. Oh, my husband teach me sometime because he citizen, but he never speak English with me, but sometime he teach me with books. I need practice with talking because I don't know speak very good. I don't know speak English. When I'm learning a book, I'm memory and when it's good I know what a do. But when talking to anybody--I know in the book, but not remembering! I can't the words, the little words, I don't know. I'm forgot all!

She is glad for the opportunity to go to the Even Start Family Literacy Program at the school next to her apartment complex. She finds it refreshing to get out of her small apartment and be in company with other women at the program. The Even Start program has increased her interest in learning English because she finds it is a better fit for her life than other methods she has tried. Even though she had been in the program just two months when I first observed, she immediately caught my attention through her active participation and interaction in the ESL lesson. Some of her observations about how participation in the programs benefits her follow:

The Even Start program it's good for me because first I'm teach English and I want in future to have home school in

my home for my kids. I need know very good English and maybe next year I'm go to the college Pine Hill. Because now Even Start help me because I have more interesting teach English and it is funny for my kids. I want change my home, sad or tired, at school it is relax and I'm talking with all people. My first one boy like very much go to the school and it's training. And Philip is always sad. He say, "No, go with the boys Mommy!" He don't want because he need stay with the baby sitter and he cry very much. But I like Even Start.

For Berta, the availability of the Even Start Family Literacy Program in her neighborhood school has meant the difference between struggling with solitary attempts at learning English and being part of a group which interacts during the learning process. This has made an important difference for Berta and in six short months she was in conversation with an English-only speaker, me, and made herself understood. The fortunate combination of availability and high interest have produced noticeable results for her..

Assisting Children's Learning

Assisting the education of her children is a primary concern of Berta's. She views herself as an active participant in her children's learning. On every occasion we talked, she commented on how she hoped to home school her children. She realistically realizes that her

English must be greatly improved, in her words *perfect*, before she could adequately teach them. She is interested in a curriculum from her church and would like to go to Georgia to get training, but that opportunity is not imminent. She credits Even Start with opening her eyes to how to work with her children and admits she never really thought about it before attending classes. The Even Start Family Literacy Program's goal of educating parents to be their child's first teacher has had a direct influence on Berta's life.

She is proud of 3 year-old Miguel and considers him very bright. He asks her for English translations when watching TV and is learning the Spanish vowel sounds from pictures Berta has drawn and taped to the walls at his eye level: "All the room I putting the picture and every day say 'Grande' and 'Chica' (referring to the capital and lower case letters she has written next to her drawings) and he say, Mommy, it's 'A' chiquita." It is clear that Berta is as serious about her children's learning as she is her own, as the following comments illustrate:

It's very important for me, Even Start, because I know now work with my babies. With the paper or activity at school with my kids. It's very important for me. Before never I do nothing about with my kids. Even Start teach me very good and now I play with my kids in my home too, and I have more idea how teach with my kids. It's very, very nice. I have book for the colors and I have book for the numbers.

Miguel he is very good the numbers. He knows animals. With my ticket for Even Start and the public, the library when I had eight tickets I can get something whatever and I get book colors and book numbers and animals and the book say 100 words common. Words like bed, paper. And he know very good. When I'm doing picture for him ask, "What is it?" My picture not as good, it's ugly, but he know very good. It's pizza or ice cream or banana or stars or sun or tree, whatever. He know and say always, "What is in English, Mommy?"

Berta is very concerned about staying with her children at all times and claims that if they must attend public school, she will be there voluntarily with them. She is unhappy with what she has seen of public school bilingual classes, claiming the Hispanic teachers she has seen speak an unwholesome blend of Spanish and English, which she finds offensive:

I want to stay with they all the time in my home or in the school I want stay with them all the time with them.

Elementary school or kindergarten or maybe home school because I know a lot of teachers that Spanish is not as good. Spanish is very, very ugly. The teacher teach is Spanish the children a lot of words not as good. It's English and it's Spanish and it's all very ugly, ugly, ugly! In Spanish

is "No toche." Don't touch. The teacher say, "No touche."

For me it's very ugly, ugly, ugly! She use Spanish not as good. The teacher know what is the word exactly for the kids. For me not is funny. It's ugly!

For Berta, it is clear that second best or close enough are not appropriate or acceptable to her children's education. She is adamant about learning language correctly, whether it be Spanish or English. Berta thinks the Even Start program provides good language modeling in Spanish, which she appreciates. She is actively pursuing her role as her children's first teacher in these preschool years, and it remains to be seen how their future schooling will play out. At the present time, the Even Start Family Literacy Program is providing her with beginning instruction and some initial tools to carry on the task of introducing her children to the learning process. Her involvement in the Even Start Family Literacy Program helps her better understand her significant role in the education of her children. New attitudes and changes in behaviors which enrich the daily lives of her children are the result of her participation in the Even Start Family Literacy Program.

Emerging Sense of Self

Although very young, Berta has a strong sense of what she wants and needs to improve her life. During our times together, it was often difficult to keep the conversation from straying into her compelling life difficulties. At these times, I was aware my role as interviewer was

superseded by the need to be a compassionate listener. Berta is goal-oriented with learning English, teaching her children, and paying her bills her present foci. She indicated that this would be her last baby since she wanted to have time to devote to these three children: "And no more babies! (laughter) It's important for me to um, spend more time with them." Berta has gained confidence working with her children in the Even Start Family Literacy Program and has greatly increased her English ability in a short time, adding to her sense of accomplishment. She is learning with and from the women in the program. Berta appreciates the environment the Even Start program provides for having contact with others.

Interest in Furthering Own Education

Berta's concern for finances spurs her interest in learning English in order to be able to seek employment that she deems suitable. She is steadfast in her resolve not to work outside her home so she can be with her children. When queried about her goals for the future, she responded in this way:

I don't know exactly, but when I have 30 years, I need graduation from something. In Mexico, I'm work graduation for accountant, but not in university because I come here. But here I want to work taxes. Because I had computer and I know a little bit about it. Because I don't want to go the working my kids with babysitter. In accountant work in my

home, but first it's more important for me the school. It's important with me get money too because in January, February, March, you know the months of tax I like working the afternoons only. I think that next year I'm go to the college. Because this year I can go. Because when I'm very sick with my first pregnancy and this year I can't. But maybe next.

The Even Start Family Literacy Program will not give Berta the specialized training she needs to achieve her goal of becoming a tax preparation specialist, but it has given her a foothold in English which she may continue to pursue in the Even Start program or at another school.

Chapter Five

A Discussion of the Data

Introduction

The relationship between the data and the original question--What are the effects of the Even Start Family Literacy Program on selected parent participants?--is explored in this chapter. The chapter opens with the findings from the data relating to the themes generated from the interviews: increased interest in learning English; assisting children's learning; enhanced sense of self; and interest in furthering participants' own education. A discussion of the original question and the connections to, or differences in, the experiences of the participants follows. The chapter continues with an exploration of what my understandings are of the findings and the process of inquiry. The chapter ends with implications for further study and a concluding statement.

Findings

The data I collected and analyzed indicated that the Even Start Family Literacy Program influenced the selected parent participants in these domains.

Increased Interest in Learning English Resulting from the Adult ESL Environment

All of the selected parent participants showed an increased interest in learning English, which was an outgrowth of the interaction

and supportive environment of the adult ESL classes. While an interest in learning English was an initial factor in attending the program, all three indicated that their motivation to learn more English increased in the Even Start Family Literacy class setting, with two of them citing the group interaction and support as factors. One of the ways in which this increased motivation was demonstrated was by agreeing to be in conversation with me. Each of them lamented their limited access to English speakers and willingly chose to cooperate with my request in order to gain the practice in speaking English they desired. One of the women, Delia, felt that even more English could be used stating, "...we know Spanish. We want to learn English. We have to learn to speak English, write English." Two of the women had made attempts at working on English acquisition through individual study, but found that method too difficult and isolating. The third interviewee had not attempted any sort of self instruction. She learned the English that she knew from communicating with her older children. She indicated she needed to increase her English skills to get the attention of her English-speaking teenagers.

Support in Assisting Their Children's Learning

Each of the participants showed interest in their childrens' schooling. They were glad to have an opportunity to share the books used in class in their home settings. Each of them spoke of doing their Even Start homework of reading and sharing the books from class with

their children. One mother, Delia, told of how her kindergarten daughter corrected her English: "I read the book to her every night and when I say some words wrong, she tells me that." Another of the mothers, Juanita, stated, "I think my children need only my help. I work with my children. I read the book in home to my children." The youngest mother, Berta, credited the Even Start Family Literacy Program with helping her develop awarenesses about young children's learning that she did not have before entering the program. She commented, "It's very important for me because I know now work with my babies. It is very important for me the before never I do nothing about with my kids. Even Start teach me." This theme explores the ways in which the Even Start Family Literacy Program influenced the participants to help their children with learning activities.

Enhanced Sense of Self

The participants indicated that before participating in the Even Start Family Literacy Program they each had felt a sense of isolation and separateness being at home alone with their children. In the interviews they talked about things they accomplished through connection with the program. Berta, the mother of two preschool sons talked about how being in company with others at the program site changed her emotional climate saying, ". . .at my home sad, or tired--at school it is relax and I'm talking with all people." During my class time observation, I noted the out-going and involvement-oriented attitude this young woman brought

to her interactions. Her sociability contrasted with the reserved manner Delia, one of the other parent participants, displayed. Juanita stated, "I think I need go to somewhere and look different people and talk because I'm stay all day in home. I'm very closed. I not see anybody. My opportunity is go to Even Start and because this help me to learn English and look at other people."

Juanita, the mother of six, described how her involvement with the Even Start graduation program rekindled her creativity. She was challenged to devise costumes for the children in the skit and reported, "Yeah, believe it or not a couple years I not work on machine and Even Start teach to do and got the material and do something, you know, flowers and everything. Yeah, because years before I say, oh no, I can't do that. I can't. And not doing nothing. And now!"(laughs and grins with pride at her accomplishment).

Heightened Interest in Furthering own Education

When directly asked about their own goals for the future, all of the participants indicated an intention to follow the Even Start Family Literacy Program with continued schooling. While one of the mothers, Delia, knew she wanted to go to school for more English and training, she was unclear of her goals stating, "Training something different. I think something easy, not too hard. (Laughter) Something like I don know what because, um, there are lots of things." Juanita looked back on her lack of opportunity and said, "I feel very sad because I not receive school and I

stay only home. I stay only home and I want a job or I want to, ummm, a professional, like you. But one more year you see me in somewhere. (Laughs) I wanna go to the school everyday!" The youngest of the mothers, Berta, was clearer about her goal to be able to do tax preparation from her home. She knew what was necessary for her to meet this goal and declared, "I need know very good English and maybe next year I'm go to the college Pine Hill."

Effects of an Even Start Family Literacy Program

The Even Start Family Literacy Program influenced the lives of each of the three selected parent participants. It is important to compare the experiences of the participants, in order to address the sub-questions of how the program benefited the participants; how the program could better meet their needs; in what ways participation made a difference for participants; participants' hopes for the future; and changes in participants' lives as a result of participation. These similarities and differences are attributable, in part, to personality differences as well as to life circumstances. While the participants were exposed to the same environment, their individual responses to similar circumstances were marked by their own individuality. For example, Delia's personal preference for a highly structured English-only learning environment grew out of her experience with a previous class. What I observed as her reserved manner in class kept her more separated from group interaction than Juanita and Berta. Both of these women displayed more noticeably

outgoing personalities. Juanita and Berta did not comment about the amount of English used in class and seemed comfortable with the use of Spanish for explanation and conversation. They also interacted more with the other participants. Despite these differences, all three of the women indicated that they liked the ESL classes and found them helpful in learning English.

The three participants shared the opinion that the Even Start program was good for their children and helpful to them in providing literacy opportunities. Berta was exceptionally clear in crediting Even Start with educating her in ways she could assist in the learning of her preschool children. All participants read the books from the program to their children at home and each said they and their children enjoyed that activity. Each of them professed an appreciation for the opportunity to interact with their children during PACT activities. My observations of these regularly scheduled occasions verified their stated interaction with their children during class time. Delia and Juanita had more contact with their girls during the parent/child learning times. Berta's 3 year-old son was more easily distracted and quicker to lose interest, but I watched Berta carefully working to find ways to engage him in the activity at hand. When she was unsuccessful he would roam the room awhile, returning to involve himself in what she directed him to do. This way of interacting was appropriate for a very young child. The Even Start environment provided the situations, materials, and guidance from the parent

advocate to help the mothers gain experience in assisting the learning of their children. They related this as a benefit in learning how to interact with and assist their children in learning situations.

I interpreted from the interviews and observations that all of the women felt better about themselves as a consequence of their participation in the program. Juanita, in particular, indicated she had attempted projects that she would not have undertaken had it not been for Even Start encouragement. She was clearly proud of her accomplishments and credited the Even Start program for nudging her into a new level of self-confidence.

All of the women indicated an interest in continuing their education in direct response to inquiries about their futures. I believe that their participation in Even Start is instrumental to their thinking about education. While Berta focused on seeking explicit instruction in tax preparation, Delia and Juanita were less specific. Delia wanted additional training in "something not too hard," while Juanita wanted to become a "professional." These statements led me to infer that they both saw themselves as individuals who could gain better access to the American mainstream by extending their educations, even though they were not clear about their career preferences. Their hopes for the future led them in the direction of purposeful change.

Understandings Gained

The process of formulating a research question, developing sub-

questions, collecting and analyzing data, and working with findings opened me to a new range of experiences. I have formidable respect for the women I interviewed. They are putting forth effort and succeeding in their efforts to acquire English fluency and help their children with their schooling, all against a backdrop of difficult circumstances. The complexities of their lives could keep them from trying to acclimate to American society and the community where they live by learning English. These women, however, have chosen to take advantage of the opportunity the Even Start Family Literacy Program offers to assist them in gaining more access to American society, through English acquisition, without having to abandon their Mexican culture. I was pleased with the access I gained to interview the women. We agreed we were helping each other with what we both needed, English practice for them and information about the effects of the Even Start Family Literacy Program for me.

I was unprepared for the way two of the participants shared compelling personal difficulties in their lives with me. At the time, my intuition guided me to accept these interview diversions as necessary to the personal interviewer/interviewee relationship we had formed. I also felt a great sense of empathy. They had come to view me, I believe, as part of the support system of the Even Start Family Literacy Program. These revelations added rich contextual information and a human dimension to our conversations.

Implications for Further Study

The effects of the Even Start Family Literacy Program on selected parent participants has implications for further attempts at including the broader community in the Even Start Family Literacy Program. Each of the women I interviewed felt they had too little access to English speakers. When I participated in small group activity during class sessions, I was sought out by women who wanted the opportunity to converse in English. They wanted the challenge of making themselves understood. I believe it is worth investigating ways in which the English-speaking community can cooperate in assisting adult ESL speakers.

One possibility is to pair the Even Start Family Literacy parent participants with English speaking volunteers. These volunteers would be people interested in helping the ESL parents gain practice in using English. Schools, churches, senior groups, and community service organizations offer possible pools of interested candidates. Letter writing, computer e-mail, video taping, and telephone conversations, along with scheduled class visits, are potential ways to increase the English interface my parent participants indicated they wanted.

Conclusion

I began this study out of a genuine interest in ways that the community can assist families who speak English as a second language. My instinct was that programs which specifically foster parent and child interaction on any level are useful, and those which explicitly offer

educational opportunity to second language families make a real contribution to the community. I believe that developing ways to support and assist families in their role as learning environments is fundamentally beneficial to our society. It is my belief that the Even Start Family Literacy Program in the south San Francisco Bay Area school district I observed fulfills the need for a practical, constructive program to assist ESL families. It makes a difference in the lives of the participants of this study by providing English language and literacy opportunity to families in need of this support. It does so with cultural sensitivity and through collaboration with the participants to provide personally meaningful assistance and instruction. The experience of connecting with the women I interviewed, learning about the ways in which they viewed their program encounters, and placing myself in a position to appreciate the difficulties they needed to surmount in their daily lives provided the opportunity for reflection on my own thoughts, perceptions and attitudes regarding ESL families. I have experienced real personal growth in learning the effects of the Even Start program on the women who shared their stories with me.

Appendix I

Interview Questions

Interview 1

1. Tell me about where you are from. How long have you lived here?
2. What do you remember about going to school? What was it like for you? How is alike or different from your children's experience?
3. How did you learn about the Even Start Program? How long have you participated in the program? Did you have any English when you started?
4. Outside of Even Start, do you have any opportunities to practice English?

Interview 2

1. Talk about what you like about PACT time. Do you prefer the sessions in the adult classroom or the childrens' classroom? Why?
2. What activities have you enjoyed in the Even Start program? What activities does you child enjoy?
3. How does the Even Start Program help you learn about how your child learns?
4. What do you like about the Even Start program for yourself? For your children?

Interview 3

1. In what ways do you think the Even Start program works for you? For your children? What would you add to the program? Take out?
2. What has it meant to you to be involved in the Even Start program?

3. What are your hopes for yourself and your family from participating in Even Start?
4. Do you think you have changed from your participation in the Even Start program? In what ways.

Appendix II
A Sample of Household Funds of Knowledge

*Agriculture
and Mining*

*Material and
Scientific
Knowledge*

Ranching and Farming

Horse riding skills
Animal management
Soil and irrigation
systems
Crop planting
Hunting, tracking, dressing

Construction

Carpentry
Roofing
Masonry
Painting
Design and
architecture

Mining

Timbering
Blasting
Equipment operation

Repair

Airplanes
Automobile
House
maintenance
Tractor

Economics

Medicine

Business

Market values
Appraising

Renting and selling
Loans
Labor laws
Building codes
Consumer knowledge

Accounting
Sales

Medicine

Drugs
First Aid
procedures
Anatomy
Midwifery

Herbal
knowledge
Folk cures
Folk veterinary
cures

Household Management

Budgets

Religion

Catechism

Child care
Cooking
Appliance repair

Baptisms
Bible studies
Moral
knowledge
and ethics

(Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzales, 1992)

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